



Watertown City Council
Work Session

Mayor Michael Walters
Kay Thul
Adam Pawelk
Fred McGuire
Dan Schuette

2/28/2023 - Minutes

1. Call To Order And Roll Call

Mayor Walters called the Watertown City Council work session to order at 5:30 p.m. on February 28, 2023, in the council chambers of City Hall.

Council Members Present: Michael Walters, Adam Pawelk, Kay Thul and Fred McGuire.

Council Members Absent: Dan Schuette.

Staff Present: City Administrator Jake Foster, and Administrative Services Director Maggie Reisdorf.

Others Present: None.

2. New Business

2.1. Food Truck Ordinance Discussion

Mayor Walters introduced this item. He informed that there have been discussions in the past about whether the city should consider a food truck ordinance. He stated that food trucks are becoming more popular for events and gatherings, but food trucks do not currently fit well under the "solicitor" ordinance as far as regulation goes. Walters explained that staff was asked to review the creation of a food truck ordinance further and bring it back to the City Council for more discussion.

Foster reviewed the desire to look into a food truck ordinance, stating that in 2022, with the increased desire and application of food trucks to operate within the city, that the city was finding it hard to license the vendors under the current merchant/solicitor/peddler permit. He informed that the city had received some complaints from community members, business owners and vendors on various concerns. He said that under the current permitting ordinance, that food truck vendors didn't really fit within the definition and therefore explained the reason for reviewing a separate food truck ordinance.

Foster provided food truck ordinance information from other cities that have enacted ordinances specifically for food trucks. He explained that cities can vary in certain regulation areas. He stated that

these items include where to allow food trucks to park, their allowed hours of operation, and other items like insurance requirements, background checks, permit costs and MN Health Department Licensure.

Foster asked the City Council to start the ordinance discussion by first discussing parking requirements. He specifically asked where food trucks would be allowed to park. He explained that some cities only allow food trucks in public parks and/or at private businesses with dedicated parking lots (with permission from the business owner). He said that other cities allow trucks to be parked on public streets in front of private residences with documented permission from the private property owner. He continued that some cities prohibit parking on public streets all together with some exceptions for catered private events.

Foster explained that food trucks within the City of Watertown have generally located within neighborhoods; commonly in neighborhood cul-de-sacs.

Walters stated that he had seen this in the past as well. He said that there had been some complaints about street congestion, however.

Foster explained that with an ordinance, if allowed to park on public streets, he would recommend an approval process that would make sure there is enough allowable space to park to have adequate traffic flow. He said it would also include getting private property owner approval.

Walters stated that the food trucks in general have been well received and acknowledged that they are becoming more popular. He explained that he is in favor of establishing an ordinance that is food truck and business friendly.

Pawelk expressed the need to consider current businesses located within the downtown. He explained that maybe some of the parking lots would work to park at and operate at, but that other businesses would need to be considered. He recommended not allowing food trucks in high traffic areas that could further increase current traffic issues. He suggested eliminating state/county roads.

Walters recommended a specific measure of feet away from other restaurants.

Thul referenced a city ordinance that stated that a food truck needed to be 1,000 feet away from other restaurants.

Foster informed that some cities does allow food trucks within their downtown district as a way to eliminate competition with the downtown businesses.

Pawelk brought up city parks as potential parking locations. He recommended 500 feet instead of 1000 feet from the downtown area.

Foster asked the City Council to discuss hours of operation for food trucks. He stated that he could see operations being in line with other city noise ordinances which usually regulated from 8 am – 10 pm.

Pawelk said that that made sense.

Walters and Thul agreed.

Walters explained that someone could always ask for an exception.

Thul stated that the ordinance could include restaurant permission for a food truck to be closer in proximity as it relates to the ordinance requirements.

Pawelk explained that with any new ordinance, it will need to be monitored and reviewed. He said that ordinances are always changeable.

Pawelk asked about if food trucks would be allowed at highland park since there is a concession stand usually at large park events.

There was additional review and discussion on food truck locations in the downtown district and when and if they would be permitted.

McGuire recommended allowing food trucks to be at least 200 feet from another restaurant. He explained that anything above 200 feet can be a bit of a walk for people from the downtown area.

Foster agreed with the 200 feet. He suggested 200 feet from a restaurant or closer with the permission of the specific restaurant.

Pawelk explained that the city would have to consider church events.

There was discussion on work compensation requirements are referencing state statute requirements within the ordinance.

Walters initiated the discussion around the cost of permitting food trucks.

There was discussion on structuring the permit costs similar to that of the City of Buffalo. That included \$25/day or \$100/year.

Pawelk explained that staff needed to make sure that the permit fees covers the administrative permitting process and overall staff time.

Pawelk asked if the city needed to do background checks. He stated that he thought the State of Minnesota already performed background checks for food trucks. He asked staff to investigate it.

There was additional discussion on parking, specifically overnight parking.

Thul recommended that the application include information about their business website. She also asked to include the applicant's driver's license information.

Foster thanked the City Council for the discussion and stated that he believed he had enough information to draft a first draft of the food truck ordinance to bring back to the City Council later.

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 pm.

309 Lewis Avenue South; P.O. Box 279, Watertown, MN 55388

Michael Walters, Mayor

ATTEST: _____

Margaret Reisdorf, Admin. Services Director